

Teaching Writing in Years 1–3

Building a Strong Foundation

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Introduction

Building a strong foundation is the focus for literacy teaching and learning in years 1–3. An early start to intensive, focused literacy instruction is crucial for ensuring that students make expected progress and do not fall behind. This resource is designed to help you improve the effectiveness of your teaching of writing in these first three years. It emphasises the importance of building a strong literacy foundation and supports you to maintain the rate of progress your students will need to make to become successful, lifelong writers.

Strong Beginnings – Starting School

What do your students bring to their learning?

Getting off to a good start is essential for building a strong foundation. The first step is to find out what strengths, experiences, knowledge, and skills your students already have that they can bring to their learning. The literacy and cultural experiences of students in new entrant classrooms will be diverse. Some students may come to school already able to read and write, some may have strong oral language backgrounds but little experience with books, and others may not have English as their first language. The extent and nature of their early childhood education experiences will also vary. For information about English language learners and early literacy, go to <http://esolonline.tki.org.nz/ESOL-Online/Student-needs/The-English-Language-Learning-Progressions>

If new entrants have come from a preschool setting, it is likely that they will have a portfolio or personal learning profile. These personalised records contain a wealth of information about their strengths and their needs for learning and literacy development. The example below shows part of the preschool record for Sam, a new entrant. In this example, his preschool teacher describes Sam's initial attempts at writing when he was nearly three.

29/9/09

After I had a chat with his dad, one of my goals was to encourage Sam to write his name. Today, Sam, Simon, and Kahu decided to write their names. We practised our names, and we counted who has got the most letters in their name.

21/10/09

Sam and Simon were at the table writing their names on the whiteboard with the markers. They both had fun talking to each other, writing their names, and comparing the similar letters in their names.

Comment from Sam's mother

Sam likes to point out letters that he recognises from his name, especially the "S". But he doesn't have much interest in writing at home, so it's good that his friends encourage him to give it a go.

When Sam started school, his preschool teacher's description of his love of reading provided much insight for his new entrant teacher about his literacy experiences.

16/11/11

Well, Sam, you are almost off to school. I was putting your portfolio together for your birthday mat time and thought I would like to mention your absolute love of books. Most days (if not every kindergarten day!) you chose a handful of books and asked a teacher to read them to you. You are always interested in the story and often ask lots of questions to help your comprehension. I have enjoyed spending reading time with you. You will enjoy learning to read at school and practising at home with Mum, Dad, and Amy.

Strong links between school, whānau, and community

A student is more likely to get off to a good start in their learning when teachers deliberately develop strong relationships with the student's family/whānau and when the teaching and learning relationship is based on the concept of ako. Ako is the operative principle of any classroom or community in which every person is supported

and every person is learning. Ako embodies the understanding that learning is reciprocal: we all have something to teach, and we all have something to learn. It also embodies the understanding that learner and whānau are inextricably linked.

The sharing of knowledge about a student is a two-way process. The student's family/whānau will have much knowledge of the student's language, culture, and identity that will be valuable for your planning and teaching. Take time to get to know the student: respect and value who they are and where they come from – most importantly, build on everything that they bring to their learning. With the family/whānau, establish shared expectations for their child's progress and regularly discuss these with them. In particular, talk with student's parents/caregivers about:

- the significant people in their lives – for example, siblings, extended family/whānau, or important people in the community (church pastor, neighbours, elders)
- the languages they speak or hear at home – in particular, in stories and songs
- the literacy practices and experiences – for example, emailing or Skyping with family or whānau, reading favourite books or stories together (picture books, Bible stories), reading signs and labels when shopping
- the activities they carry out with their families – for example, cultural and religious activities, sports, special events, and celebrations.

The importance of mutually respectful relationships is central to supporting the achievement of Māori and Pasifika students, as described in *Ka Hikitia* and the *Pasifika Education Plan 2009–2012*.

Writing from their first day

Fundamental to the development of writing skills and knowledge is students' understanding that they have something to say and that print carries the message. Your students need to see themselves as writers from the beginning. This means writing from their first day at school.

Gather assessment information from the beginning

Your school will have a process for gathering information about new students during the enrolment process and the first few weeks of school. This information may come from formal assessment tools, informal observation, and each student's family/whānau. Make sure you are familiar with the process. The information gained will give you a valuable overview of their level of literacy knowledge. As well as literacy in English, it is important to gather information about a student's literacy in other languages. For English language learners, their level of literacy in their first language will have an effect on their strengths and needs in acquiring literacy in English.

Some ways of gathering information about students' literacy acquisition in the early years of school (in addition to School Entry Assessment) are summarised below.

Conversations, conferences, and interviews

Use information from conversations, conferences, and interviews with individual students.

- Gather information about their progress and discuss this with them: *On the picture you have drawn, you have written your name and the letters "T", "S", and "B". Wow! Let's write your story underneath. Tell me about your story in your picture.*
- Learn about their personal interests and their attitudes to learning: *In your portfolio from kindy, your teacher wrote that you love reading books. What do you like reading about the most?*
- Identify and discuss problems or obstacles to learning that you may not have been aware of: *I see you are trying to write your name with the pencil. Try holding it like this; it will help you to write more easily.*
- Provide personalised, specific feedback: *Wow, you have written the "b" the right way round in your name. Now we can read the letters correctly.*
- Agree on goals for further learning: *Now that you know where to find "a", "the", and "in" on your card, you can use them in your writing all by yourself without asking anyone to help you.*

(adapted from *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*, page 56)

Observe students in the classroom setting

Gather information about each student daily by observing their contributions to discussions and interactions with you and with other students. In the following case study, a teacher makes a series of observations of a student in his first few weeks of school, giving her comments on the implications for his literacy learning.

Arapeta

Week 1: School-based literacy activities included reading to him, taking photos, creating caption-type stories together, and helping him to write (and paint) his name. I observed that he likes books and stories and enjoys being read to. He knows the front of a book and that the pictures and words tell a story, and he points to text as he “reads”.

Observations	Possible next steps
<p>Arapeta chose <i>Where’s Spot?</i> and asked me to read it to him. After a few pages, he instructed me to read one page while he read the next, and so on. I modelled pointing and matching one-to-one when reading my page. We discussed the pictures.</p> <p>He:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • turned pages and looked at the left page before the right page • attempted to point under words, sometimes matching with the spoken word, sometimes “sweeping” under a whole word • “read” out loud independently. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to model pointing one-to-one while saying words. • Innovate on the text for writing.
<p>Arapeta began drawing cakes with candles in his writing book and recited, “I like eating cake.” I asked him if he would like to write his story, and he said, “I can do the ‘I.’” He remembered his sentence, and I articulated the onsets and rimes. I encouraged him to write any letters he knew. He wanted to know what letters were in “like”, so I told him. I modelled the letters for him, and he was able to write these himself. I wrote “eating” for him and worked on “cake”. He was very proud of his completed story and got lots of positive feedback from the other teachers.</p> <p>He can identify his name and has begun to write it but is unsure of letter names. He recognised that the “a” in “eating” was a letter in his name. He is attempting letter shapes. He holds a pencil in his right hand but sometimes changes to his left hand. (He counts into teens in both Māori and English.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforce and affirm writing attempts. • Provide an alphabet card to show him letters as he writes. • Point out links between letter shape, name, and associated object (for example, “I”, “leaf”). • Continue to point and reread after every word to get to the next word. • Create more “I like ...” sentences and make into own book. • Look for reading texts with “I like ...” structures.
<p>Arapeta was sitting at the table with his writing book, reading yesterday’s story to himself. Of his own accord, he went and got an alphabet card and pencil and sat down to write. (I then had to work with another student so did not observe the writing.) When I returned later, Arapeta had his writing book open at the “I like eating cake” story and was writing “I” on the whiteboard, checking with his writing book. He is concentrating hard on what he wants to do and gets tools to help himself.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue with feedback, affirming attempts. Notice when he records “I”. • Read books with “I” and find and point to this word on pages. • Use his writing for reading. • Introduce new high-frequency word (“am” or carry on with “like”).

Other assessment tools

The Literacy Learning Progressions, the English curriculum writing exemplars, and the National Standards (including the national writing illustrations) all describe expectations about students' achievement at particular points in time and provide support for making overall teacher judgements. For English language learners, also refer to *The English Language Learning Progressions: A Resource for Mainstream and ESOL Teachers*, which provides useful information about literacy learning in English for these students. All students will be working towards the expectations described in the National Standards. However, English language learners' pathways and rates of progress may be different. For guidelines on the National Standards and English language learners, go to the Ministry of Education website at <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/National-Standards/Key-information/Fact-sheets/English-language-learners>

An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement provides six tasks that involve specific essential early literacy behaviours. These tasks are designed to systematically observe students who have been at school for a year, but they can also be used regularly during and after the first year of school to monitor progress and pinpoint specific needs – particularly identifying letters, hearing and recording sounds, and writing vocabulary. It's also helpful to discuss your students' writing regularly with your colleagues. The benefits include:

- building consistent and shared understandings about teachers' expectations of writing at specific levels
- enabling teachers to come up with new ways of teaching students who are experiencing difficulty with their writing
- strengthening teachers' professional knowledge
- developing a collective responsibility for students' learning.

Find out more

- For the School Entry Assessment, see: <http://toolselector.tki.org.nz/Assessment-areas/Cross-curricular/School-Entry-Assessment-SEA>
- For information about the expectations for students at years 1, 2, and 3, see: <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/National-Standards/Reading-and-writing-standards/The-standards>
- For information about the skills, knowledge, and attitudes your students need to have control over by the end of each year of instruction, see: <http://literacyprogressions.tki.org.nz>
- For examples of what expected writing achievement looks like for students in years 1–3, see: <http://literacyonline.tki.org.nz/Literacy-Online/Student-needs/National-Standards-Reading-and-Writing/National-Standards-illustrations>
- For moderated and annotated examples of students' work in relation to the national curriculum, see: <http://tki.org.nz/r/assessment/exemplars/eng>
- From term 2, 2012, e-asTTle will provide assessment tasks appropriate for more adept year 1 students and year 2–3 students. Check the wording in the e-asTTle manual.
- For examples of writing by English language learners at different levels of proficiency, see *The English Language Learning Progressions: Years 1–4*, pages 41–60.

Lay the Foundation for Literacy Learning

During the first year of school, what you do as a teacher will have a major influence on the foundation your students acquire. This section suggests ways to develop your professional knowledge and implement teaching strategies that are focused on building literacy foundations, particularly in writing.

Hold high expectations

Your expectations play a big part in your students' literacy success. Base your expectations on your professional knowledge informed by the signposts laid out in *The Literacy Learning Progressions* and on the evidence you have about each student. For writing, these expectations include:

- All children can enjoy success and make expected progress.
- We build on what children already know about print.
- Writers at any stage can be independent and strategic.
- We write what we say, and we can read what we write.
- Reading and writing are reciprocal and complementary.
- Writers at any stage will have something to say about a whole lot of topics.
- Individual children bring their own unique experiences of their family and culture with them.

As soon as possible, begin to share your expectations with all the significant people in your students' lives so they can help them to enjoy success in their learning.

You may need to support some students with the expectation that they will write as well as talk about their experiences. Help them to shape their ideas into one or two sentences that they can hold in their heads and comfortably manage.

What to expect after six months

You can expect most students after six months at school to have control of:

- some print conventions (for example, full stops and capital letters)
- some high-frequency words (*Spell-Write*, list 1)
- some letter sounds, generally initial letter and dominant sounds (approximate common spellings)
- directionality and spacing
- accurate letter formation
- the expression of at least one idea in a simple sentence
- holding an idea in their head long enough to retell the sentence or “story”.

The Literacy Learning Progressions clearly convey the enormous amount of literacy knowledge and understandings that students need to acquire in the first year of school. Build your students' knowledge of letters, letter–sound relationships, concepts about print, and high-frequency words as quickly as possible so that they can apply this knowledge to their reading and writing. Reading to students, shared reading, language experience, shared writing, learning about letters and sounds, building vocabulary (oral and written), and learning to form letters correctly are key elements of the classroom programme in the early months of school.

Know more about suitable approaches for teaching writing

Key approaches to teaching writing include language experience, shared writing, interactive writing, guided writing, and independent writing. While all these approaches can be used with the whole class or small groups, you need to be strategic in your use of them. Which approach you use will depend on the specific strengths and needs of your students. For many English language learners, the approaches may be most useful if they are used together to prepare them for writing and to scaffold them into independent writing. Often the language experience approach can be used to build prior knowledge and language before using some or all of the shared writing, interactive writing, guided writing, and independent writing approaches.

Approaches	When to use and why
<p>Language experience</p> <p>Language experience involves providing students with experiences that encourage them to explore, think, and talk. The talk helps students to strengthen their control over new vocabulary and language patterns. They can then draw on this language knowledge in their subsequent reading and writing. Writing often follows a language experience. With input from the students, the teacher writes a text about the experience, which is then available for reading together and independently. Students may also develop their own texts.</p> <p>Shared language experiences can be simple and impromptu (for example, in response to a picture book the teacher has read, watching a digger working across the road, or noticing the cherry tree is in blossom). Other language experiences will be more complex or planned – for example, a trip to a park or museum, or classroom-based activities (such as an experiment that introduces a scientific concept, cooking popcorn, or painting a mural).</p> <p>Sometimes language experience may be linked to a shared or guided reading text – for example, sharing and writing about the students' experiences of <i>White Sunday</i> before or after reading <i>White Sunday in Samoa</i> (Ready to Read).</p>	<p>As well as being very engaging and motivating, language experience is highly scaffolded and low risk. It is especially helpful for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • building a bank of experiences that students (who may come from diverse backgrounds) have in common and that can be recalled and referred to often • enriching the language of all students • introducing classroom literacy to students who are new to school • supporting students, including English language learners, who need extra help with vocabulary and grammar • providing models and motivation for students who struggle to express themselves or to decide what they want to write • introducing new ideas and concepts in cross-curricular studies. <p>Language experience activities also provide a valuable opportunity to involve parents or caregivers in the classroom programme. Adult helpers can work with small groups of students during the activities, encouraging talk and offering assistance as necessary.</p>
<p>Shared writing</p> <p>In shared writing, the teacher and the students plan and construct a text together. The teacher models and explains the process. Shared writing may include the use of text models. Although some aspects of shared writing overlap with language experience writing, the focus in language experience is on using experiences to enrich students' language through discussion while the purpose of shared writing is for students to learn about writing.</p> <p>Shared writing is often followed by guided writing, in which students practise applying what they have learnt about writing.</p>	<p>Use this approach at all year levels when you want to teach a specific aspect of writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As with language experience writing, shared writing is highly scaffolded and low risk. It is especially helpful for: • supporting students with specific needs in writing (for example, those who have difficulty with planning, generating, and building on ideas, making vocabulary choices, and using a variety of sentence structures) • scaffolding English language learners. <p>Follow shared writing lessons with guided or independent practice. For students who need more support, use interactive writing as a bridge to building independence.</p>

Approaches	When to use and why
<p>Interactive writing</p> <p>Interactive writing is most effective with a small group. It's a variation on shared writing in which the teacher leads the writing and provides a model (of a short section of text) and the students each "scribe" the same text on an individual clipboard or whiteboard. Students can practise their letter–sound knowledge, letter formation, words, and spelling with the security of a model and opportunities for immediate feedback and support from the teacher.</p>	<p>Interactive writing provides a safe and supportive environment for reluctant writers, English language learners, and any students who need to focus on the technical aspects of writing, for example, hearing and recording sounds in words, forming letters correctly and efficiently, writing high-frequency words quickly and accurately, spelling, and using punctuation.</p>
<p>Guided writing</p> <p>In guided writing, the teacher works with a group on a specific writing task, usually building on a learning goal that has been introduced in a previous shared writing lesson. "The students learn from each other as well as from the teacher, seeking and responding to feedback as they each think and talk their way through the task" (<i>Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4</i>, page 108).</p>	<p>Use with groups of students to build on a specific learning goal previously introduced in shared writing.</p>
<p>Independent writing</p> <p>Students write by themselves for a range of purposes, including working towards specific learning goals and practising what they have learnt from shared and guided writing.</p>	<p>As well as working on teacher-directed writing tasks, all students need time to write for their own purposes. Provide many opportunities for writing throughout the school day.</p>

Find out more

- See *Learning through Talk: Oral Language in Years 1 to 3* for information on language experience (page 78) and building students' awareness about ways of participating in group discussions (pages 21–23, 67–68, and 79–80).
- See *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4* for information on shared writing (pages 104–108), interactive writing (pages 107–108), guided writing (page 108), and independent writing (page 109).

Build on oral language

Talk is an essential planning tool for writing. Make sure that your students have many opportunities to talk before, during, and after writing. Young students should be encouraged to also use pictures to plan and orally rehearse what they are going to write.

Use group discussions, sharing circles, and strategies (such as think, pair, and share and talking with a buddy for a specific purpose) to help your students to think more deeply – to explore and clarify their ideas, to reflect on their own writing, and to respond to others in a supportive environment. The think, pair, and share strategy is particularly helpful for building and clarifying students' ideas through talk and provides opportunities for English language learners to practise and polish their language skills. Remember, however, that English language learners need to know or be taught the words, phrases, and sentences they need to be able to participate in discussions. English language learners will also benefit from opportunities to explore concepts, discuss their ideas, and plan their writing in their first language. Because they have their strong oral language base in a language other than English, it is also useful to create opportunities for English language learners to continue acquiring literacy in this language. They can transfer literacy knowledge and skills from one language to another once the necessary level of language proficiency is reached in the second language.

Encourage your students to share their ideas, opinions, and experiences; and support their planning for writing. See the following page for an example of this.

Example

It's been very hot today – let's talk about how we feel when it's very hot.

Our gala day was fun. Tell your buddy what you enjoyed. Help each other to remember the things that were at the gala so you can decide what to include in your writing.

In your group, choose six photos that show what we did when Sami's mum showed us how to cook Indian sweets. Put them in the right order and work together to write a sentence or two about each photo.

In your discussions with your students before, during, and after a writing task:

- clarify the audience and purpose of the writing
- introduce new vocabulary and language structures
- activate your students' prior knowledge and make links to previous learning
- model ways of constructing meaning or refining their ideas
- stimulate your students to think critically
- encourage your students to reflect on whether their writing meets their purpose
- provide feedback after the writing.

Example

Teacher: *I can see a bed in your drawing. Is that you in bed? Tell me what's happening.*

Student: *I'm in bed with my monkey.*

Teacher: *Wow, you have a monkey? What do you want to write about your monkey?*

Student: *I go to bed with my monkey.*

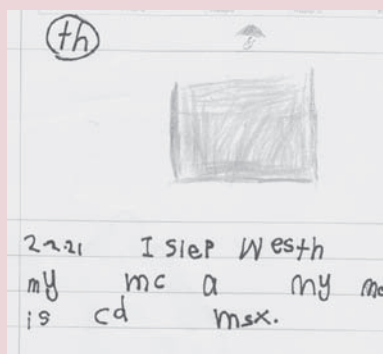
Teacher: *How will you start?*

Student: *I know how to write "I".*

Teacher: *Yes, and what will the next word be?*

Student: *I'm going to write "sleep". I sleep with my monkey.*

Teacher: *Say the word slowly (demonstrates "stretching out" the word). Write the sounds you can hear ... I'll check in with you when you have written those words.*



Give feedback after the writing

Teacher: *You have got the "w" for the start of "with". Can you hear the end sound? Listen to me as I say it – **with** (emphasises the end sound). You say it.*

Student: ***With**. It sounds like "the" (writes w-e-s-th).*

Teacher: *That's right. I'm going to write "th" here for you to remember the letters that make that sound. Can you tell me anything else about your monkey?*

Find out more

For more information about classroom talk, see *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*, pages 28–29, 88–89, and 174; and *Learning through Talk*, pages 20–29 (oral language and classroom participation) and pages 63–81 (engaging learners with talk).

Build knowledge of vocabulary and grammar

Most students come to school already able to talk and to understand spoken language. They have learnt to communicate within familiar settings and to adapt their language use to a range of situations. The deliberate act for teaching is to build on this foundation and to show your students how they can draw on their oral language to support their literacy learning. For students who need more specific oral language support, including those students who are learning English as an additional language, identify the words they need to know and plan structured tasks to teach them.

Expose your students to rich uses of language and encourage the extension of their vocabulary and language structures. For example:

Teacher action	Teacher comment
Draw attention to (and, if necessary, explain the meanings of) new and interesting words and language structures when reading to students and feed in new words during discussions and when modelling writing.	<i>Yesterday Maisy told us that her cat was bad because she was hissing and spitting. Well, my cat is a hissing and spitting cat, too. She stands at the door, and her ears go flat, and her eyes go wild. Then she hisses and spits because she is angry. I will start my story by saying: “My cat, Precious, is a hissing and spitting cat.”</i>
Use new words many times throughout the day and encourage students when they do so.	<i>Spiky is such a good word to describe your grandad’s hair. That really helps me to picture what he looks like. Do you remember when we looked at the spiky plants earlier today? They had sharp, pointy leaves that stuck out all over the place.</i>
Plan experiences, using questions and “think-alouds” to encourage student responses.	<i>The caretaker is sorting the recycling today. Let’s go and watch him. What do you think the things in that bin are made of?</i>
Extend vocabulary by introducing and emphasising words.	<i>The paper and cardboard is going to be burnt. Do you think the caretaker will light the fire “carefully”?</i>
Lead discussion in response to shared stories.	<i>I wonder how the sun will feel when he realises he has been trapped by Maui. What do you think?</i>
Direct students to notice the effect of deliberately selected words in texts.	<i>Which words show us how the dragons move? The dragons flew ... and the dragons swished! Show me what swishing looks like. What else might swish? How could we use the word swish?</i>

Transfer vocabulary knowledge to writing

Support your students to transfer their vocabulary knowledge to writing by:

- building up word banks they can refer to
- planning learning activities that use new ideas and vocabulary
- reminding them to draw on their new learning (for example, “Find a word on the chart that you could use instead of said” or “Remember how the dragons moved into the town – they swooped and swished”).

Scaffold your students’ use of grammar through explicit teaching and by providing many opportunities for them to practise. Knowledge of grammar is essential for supporting their progress in literacy learning. For example, year 1 students should be able to “describe events in the present, past, and future”, “understand the main question forms of English, such as those starting with what, where, when, who, why, and how”, and understand common pronouns (*Learning through Talk*, pages 75–76). See *The English Language Learning Progressions* for expectations for English language learners.

Differentiated instruction for English language learners

English language learners may need extra support with aspects such as vocabulary and sentence structures. Provide opportunities to build on their cultural and linguistic knowledge. Encourage English language learners who can write in their first language to do so. Provide opportunities for English language learners with the same first language to build their thinking and clarify links to English by talking about their work in their shared language. In combination with explicit instruction (which includes modelling and providing many examples and opportunities for scaffolded practice and feedback), sentence starters and sentence frames are useful scaffolds to support writing. Note that for all students, but for English language learners in particular, skills in listening and reading (receptive skills) will usually be more developed than in speaking and writing (productive skills).

Find out more

- For suggestions on how you can introduce and explore vocabulary, and support students with aspects of grammar, see the teacher support materials for Ready to Read and Junior Journal texts.
- For information about expectations for students' knowledge of vocabulary and grammar during the first three years of school, see *Learning through Talk*, pages 42–44.
- For ideas about building vocabulary and language structures, see *Learning through Talk*, pages 70–76.
- For further information about building students' knowledge of grammar, see: <http://soundsandwords.tki.org.nz/Grammar>
- For further information on supporting English language learners, see: <http://esolonline.tki.org.nz> and *Supporting English Language Learning in Primary Schools*.

Connect reading and writing

Plan instruction that demonstrates how to transfer your students' growing understandings from their reading to their writing, and vice versa. Also, support them to notice and draw on the incidental links and learning opportunities that arise during the school day. Creating and reading language experience texts is a powerful way of demonstrating links between reading and writing (and between talking and writing).

Clay (1998) describes some advantages of a student learning to write as they become a reader:

- Writing highlights letter forms, letter sequences, and letter clusters.
- When writing, the student switches between different levels of information in the print. That is, letters build up into words, words into phrases, phrases into sentences, and sentences into a text.
- Writing draws on the same sources of knowledge as reading (such as letters, sounds, words, and syntax), but because writing is a slower process, the student examines these sources of knowledge more closely, for example, through their repeated, slow articulation of each word to identify individual sounds.
- The expectation that the student will take responsibility for checking their writing is equivalent to the expectation that students will self-monitor their reading. In many cases, the strategies are similar and reinforce one another.

In particular, analysis of the Observation Survey tasks, administered at school entry and at five years six months, can help you to identify opportunities for strengthening reciprocity between reading and writing. For example:

- How can I use the information I have about this student's reading and writing achievement to inform my teaching for this student (these students)?
- Are the student's strengths stronger in either reading or writing?
- How can particular strengths in either reading or writing be used to support the other?
- How is this student tracking towards independence as a reader and as a writer?
- Can the student read the same words they have written?
- Is the student able to write the words they can read?
- Are they able to form letters they can identify?
- What links can be made from hearing and recording sounds (for example, from sound to letter) to rereading continuous sound (for example, letter to sound)?

Encourage students to explore and imitate

Writers of all ages learn about writing through exploring and imitating the writing of others. Along with the texts you create through language experience activities and shared writing, the texts you use for shared and guided reading will often provide excellent models and motivation for your students. Text models are particularly important for English language learners. Be very explicit in directing and prompting your students to notice what effective writers do, and explore such aspects as vocabulary, sentence structure, and text structure. For example, incorporate memorable language from shared and guided reading texts you're reading into your shared writing and provide support for them to do the same in their own writing.

Example

A teacher of year 1 students used the prepositional phrases in the Ready to Read Red-level books *My Bike* and/or *The Race* as models for ways that students could add detail to their personal writing.

Teacher: *Yesterday we read My Bike. Here it is, and it says ... Today Jamie wrote about her bike. She wrote: "I like to ride my bike." Where do you like to ride your bike, Jamie?*

Student: *In the park.*

Teacher: *Great. So Jamie could write: "I like to ride my bike **in the park**." Let's write that together. We can add information to our writing about where we do things!*

Instead of just writing "I like to ride my bike", you could support your students to innovate further and create their own adverbial phrases to add detail to their sentences – for example, "I like to ride my bike **over the grass** and **through the puddles**."

Find out more

For further information about writing strategies and developing awareness as a reader and writer, see *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4* (pages 41–44), including the reciprocal nature of reading and writing (page 113).

Know more about literacy acquisition

The term "create" is used in the *Reading and Writing Standards for years 1–8* to cover all three aspects of literacy acquisition (learning the code, making meaning, and thinking critically) as well as the different processes that students use when they write for specific purposes. The National Standards state: "Students will use their writing to think about, record, and communicate experiences, ideas, and information to meet specific learning purposes across the curriculum."

Find out more

- For detailed information about literacy learning, see *The Literacy Learning Progressions and Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*, chapter 2.
- For a description of a framework for literacy acquisition, see *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*.
- For further information and teaching suggestions to support the acquisition of high-frequency words, see *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*, page 35, and the notes for individual titles at the Magenta and Red levels of the Ready to Read series.

Teach spelling knowledge and skills

As your students begin to acquire a store of automatically recognised words, introduce simple spelling activities and short word lists for them to learn. The spelling words for the students to learn should be words that they are likely to use often. These will include:

- high-frequency words
- words that have a similar pattern, such as a shared rime
- words from the students' writing that they can almost spell
- words that are of high interest to the students.

It is helpful to have dictionaries, class-generated word lists, alphabet-based word lists, and lists of verb families available in the classroom. Lists and other reference materials are more effective if they have been generated in discussion with the students. This makes them topical, relevant, and on hand when needed.

From known to unknown

Create opportunities to consolidate your students' learning by choosing texts or activities that build on what they know. Prompt them to make links to their growing store of letter–sound or word knowledge. In the following example (from *Sound Sense: Phonics and Phonological Awareness*, page 9), the teacher models a variety of strategies for working out words and prompts her students to notice how they can draw upon their existing knowledge.

Example of language experience

The students at the school have been working on an art display that is currently on show at the local shopping mall. A class of year 1 students went to the mall to see the display and are now recording their experience together. They've decided to begin the shared text with: "We saw the art display at the mall." As the class works through the sentence, the teacher varies the strategies she uses according to what she knows about the students' phonological awareness and their word and letter-sound knowledge.

Words	Teacher actions
We, the, at	The teacher draws on the students' knowledge of high-frequency words.
saw	The teacher asks the students to identify the initial sound, but she tells them the rest of the word because she knows that "saw" is not a word they are familiar with in its written form.
art	The students know this word because of the art display and their preparation for it; also, there are labels in the classroom.
display	The teacher asks the students to break the word into syllables (orally). She asks them to sound out "dis". They need a bit of support with "i", so the teacher tells them it's the same sound as in "is" and "in". She draws on their word knowledge (visual memory) for "play".
mall	The teacher asks the students to identify the initial sound and draws on their knowledge of "all" to complete the word.

To construct this sentence, the students draw on their:

- knowledge of familiar words (their visual memory)
- ability to differentiate between initial, medial, and final sounds and to match letters to those sounds
- knowledge of a rime ("all")
- ability to break words into syllables.

Teaching and learning sequences such as these show students how much they already know about sounds, letters, and words and how they can draw on this knowledge in their independent writing.

Encourage your students to articulate words slowly and to draw on their knowledge of letter–sound relationships, common rimes, and word endings. Your feedback is crucial to enhancing their learning opportunities and helping them to make the best use of what they already know.

Find out more

- For help in incorporating phonics teaching into your classroom literacy programme and to support your students to develop these skills and understandings, see the Ready to Read teacher support material *Sound Sense*.
- For detailed information about supporting students to develop phonological awareness and phonics knowledge, see the Ready to Read teacher support material *Sound Sense*. For further information and/or examples, see: *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*, pages 32–37; *Learning through Talk*, pages 19–20 and 70–71; and <http://soundsandwords.tki.org.nz>
- For information about technical skills for writing, see *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*, pages 144–8.

Provide many opportunities for writing

In the classroom, writing does not happen only at “writing time”. Provide opportunities throughout the day for your students to write and see themselves as writers. As well as using planned approaches to writing, independent literacy activities are rich opportunities for them to write and to build on the close links between reading and writing.

Follow-up activities after the reading of a text will often involve writing. For example, they could innovate on the sentence structure of a text to incorporate their own experiences and ideas.

“Sam is going to the beach.” “Sunita is going to the party.” (Ready to Read *Going to the River*)

“I can read to my koro.” “I can read to my brother.” (Ready to Read *I Can Read*)

Or they could write in response to a text. For example, after reading a Ready to Read text such as *A Very Clever Possum* or *Mum’s Octopus*, the students could debate questions such as “Should people be allowed to keep possums as pets?” or “Should Mum have let the octopus go?” and then record their opinions in writing.

Conference

During writing time, wander around the classroom to monitor your students' writing progress. Help them with on-the-spot conversations or discussions. These may take the form of a question or a prompt that helps them to add further information to their writing, clarify their meaning, or find a solution for something that is proving difficult for them. These discussions are short and very focused one-to-one conversations.

Example

The students spent some time outside the classroom running through the fallen leaves, throwing them in the air, rolling in them, smelling them, and feeling them. Back in the classroom, the teacher asked them to record their sensory experiences. While they were writing, the teacher moved about and conferred with individual students.

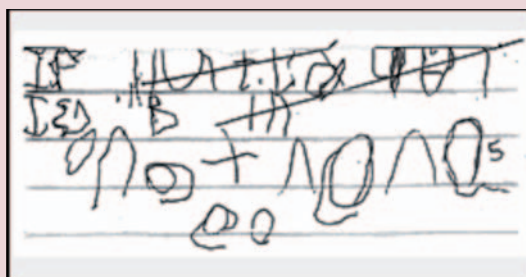
The teacher questioned Dean as he wrote: "I love the leaves."

Teacher: *Why do you love leaves?*

Dean: *Because you can pick them up and throw them and roll in them.*

Teacher: *Can you tell me that in your writing?*

Dean added to his piece before reading it aloud to the teacher.



I love the leaves. I roll on the grass.

When a number of students have a collective learning need, a planned group discussion or mini lesson is more appropriate. These, like the on-the-spot conversations, are designed to help students connect with and build on the strategies they know and use to help them become more effective writers.

Share learning goals

Make it clear to your students what they can do well and what they need to work on. These can be recorded as "I can" and "I am learning" in their writing books. Be explicit about learning goals and why they are important – for example, you could say:

You are practising this because it will help you to quickly think of ways to write words you're not sure of.

We are writing to tell each other what we enjoyed at the beach.

We are writing to explain to someone how to look after a rabbit.

Sharing learning goals:

- ensures that students are clear about the next thing they need to learn
- helps them see how successful they have been in achieving that goal.

Find out more

For information about self-assessment and peer assessment, see *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*, pages 62–63.

Teach strategically

Writing in the first year of school

In the second six months of school, students develop greater independence in their writing. Through shared and guided writing and independent practice, they gain confidence in generating ideas for writing and develop understanding about the writing process. Students plan for writing by using talk, text, or drawing and reread frequently as they write to check that they are maintaining meaning. They draw on their growing knowledge of letters, sounds, and words and build a repertoire of strategies for writing words quickly, such as:

- articulating words and recording dominant sounds in sequence
- using visual memory for high-frequency words
- drawing on analogies to generate new words (for example, using knowledge of “and” to write “sand”)
- applying knowledge of word structure (for example, word endings such as “ing” and “ed”)
- knowing where to find words quickly by using classroom resources such as familiar texts (for example, language experience texts and poem cards), wall charts, and picture dictionaries.

Check that they have the necessary proficiency with grammar to support them in their writing. For example, can they describe events in the present, past, and future, and can they ask and answer questions about what, where, when, who, why, and how?

Use information from the relevant Observation Survey (Clay) tasks to check that your students are acquiring this knowledge quickly and to identify where you need to target your instruction if they are not.

For example:

<i>Observation Survey tasks</i>	<i>Questions to ask of the data</i>
Letter Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the confusions? Do these also apply to the student’s writing? • What upper and lower case pairs are identified? • What reading links can be made with the Writing Vocabulary task? • What links can be made to this student’s concepts about print?
Word Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the student able to write the words she recognises (as in the Written Vocabulary and Hearing and Recording Sounds tasks)? • What does the student do when she comes to an unknown word? What part of the word is she attending to? Is she using initial letter/chunks? Is she using initial letter sounds when attempting to write unknown words?
Writing Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the student know how to take notice of the visual differences in print? • What features of print is this student attending to? • Does this student use a word he knows to write another word, for example, look/book? • How well is this student building control over a basic writing vocabulary? • Does the student articulate a word they cannot write fluently? • Is the student starting to control the conventions and orthographical patterns of spelling in the English language? • What links can be made from the words they can write to the words they can read in isolation (Word Test) and in text (Running Record)?

Observation Survey tasks	Questions to ask of the data
Hearing and Recording Sounds in words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the student independently articulate the words he is attempting to write? • Is the student able to represent some or all of the sounds he hears (phonemes) to letters/letter clusters (graphemes)? • What is the student's pattern of responding – i.e., is the student able to hear and record dominant sounds, sounds in isolation, sounds in sequence, or the first and last sounds of a word? • Does the student have control over any of the words he is writing? • What do partially correct responses tell you? • What do substitutions show? • Are there any sequencing errors, sounds omitted, unusual placement of letters within words, or “good confusions”?

Strategic instruction to support writing

Processes – what to teach	Deliberate acts of teaching – how to teach
Support students with generating ideas and planning (clarifying what they are actually going to write).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During language experience writing or shared writing, encourage your students to discuss the “picture plan” or photographs of a shared event. Model your thinking (think aloud) and/or explain how they can use their talk to clarify the purpose of the writing (decide the main thing to write about). • Model the use of questions (who, what, where, when, why, and how) to recall experiences and generate ideas. • Encourage students to draw detailed pictures and talk about their picture plan. This builds the concept of using a picture as a planning tool. • Provide some planning strategies for them to select from. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Encourage students to visualise the person, experience, or event they are going to write about. <i>We have all decided which part of our holiday we are going to tell each other about. Close your eyes and put yourself in that place. Notice what is around you. What do you see? Are there sounds you can hear? Smells? Who are you with? Is anyone talking – what are they saying?</i> – Ask them to tell their story to a buddy as a way of rehearsing their ideas. – Have them draw three pictures of what they want to write about and then decide on the sequence of ideas represented by the pictures.
Support students to hold an idea in their head long enough to write it down.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for your students to rehearse their ideas. <i>Talk with your partner about what you want to write.</i> • Prompt them to refer to their picture plan often to help them remember what they wanted to write. • Use a digital program such as VoiceThread to record their ideas for replay if they wish to recall part of their story. • Prompt them to verbalise their planned sentence(s) to themselves as they write.
Support students to hear and record sounds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model how to say, hear, and record the predominant sounds in the words they want to write. • Prompt them to make connections to their experiences of blending sounds and segmenting words during phonics activities and games, or during shared reading or writing. • Encourage them to take risks with the words that they want to use rather than stick with words they know how to write.

Processes – what to teach	Deliberate acts of teaching – how to teach
Support students to monitor their writing (to check that they are writing what they planned to write and that it makes sense).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind your students that their writing should reflect their plan. If they write something different, prompt them to remember. <i>“Let’s have a look at your plan. What did you want to say about the dog?”</i> • Prompt them to reread what they have written. <i>“Read what you have written so far. What word will you write next?”</i> • Direct them to use their visual memory and visual aids to check the spelling of some known words, especially high-frequency words, and to check their use of punctuation. <i>Put your finger on your first word. What do we need to remember about the first word in a sentence? Yes, we do need to use a capital letter. Does anyone need to change theirs?</i> • Direct them to read their completed writing to themselves and to a buddy.
Support students with letter formation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach letter formation during handwriting. • Provide many opportunities to practise. • Give feedback about the formation of letters during writing (just one letter per piece of writing so as not to overwhelm the student).

Alphabet and word activities that reinforce writing skills and knowledge

- Provide a range of alphabet books, puzzles, and games, including commercial software, to reinforce students’ knowledge of letters and sounds. Games such as snap, bingo, dominoes, or memory can also be adapted to include initial consonant blends, rimes, high-frequency words, and familiar vocabulary (such as the students’ names). Gradually introduce new words and more complex word features. Choose words that have links with texts that your students have read or with current topics being studied.
- Use a variety of ways (for example, magnetic letters, dough, paint, or chalk) to explore and practise letter formations.
- Attach a list of some high-frequency words or individual words on cards (see *I Can Write*, page 8) to the magnetic board so that the students can practise forming them with the magnetic letters (or copy them on the whiteboard).
- Encourage them to build and create words using a variety of media, such as magnetic letters, dough, the whiteboard (or blackboard), chalk, or a wet paintbrush on the concrete outside. (See *I Can Write* for further ideas.)
- Laminate handwriting cards so that students can write on them with whiteboard pens to practise letter formation.
- Have a supply of newspapers and magazines on hand so that students can cut out letters to create words or cut out and paste words that they can read.

Teacher monitoring and reflection

Problem identified through ongoing monitoring	Questions	Possible responses
After six months Many letters are poorly formed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is this a fine motor skills problem? (For example, can the student use scissors, throw and catch a small ball?) Or is it related to the formation of specific letters? (Check writing for specific examples.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide activities to increase fine motor skills, such as cutting activities and small ball activities. Provide opportunities to make letters in a variety of media, or with dough, or by painting letters on the concrete with water. Reteach the formation of target letters and provide many opportunities to practise. (Ask parents to support this at home.) Provide clear models for the student to copy when writing.
Near end of first year Writing is minimal. Often only one idea. Seems reluctant to write.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the student readily share ideas when talking before writing? Can they hold ideas in their head for long enough to write? Am I providing enough feedback as the student writes? Their score on Hearing and Recording Sounds was fine, but are they applying their knowledge to their classroom writing? Are there other students with similar needs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk with the student and their parents to find out more about current interests so I can engage them in generating ideas for writing. Talk with the student more about their picture as they draw before writing. Have them rehearse their story with a partner. Maybe provide some oral sentence starters. You could record an oral version of what they want to write. Use shared language experience as a way of generating oral language and ideas and provide a text model to work from. Create an innovation on a known text, leaving small, manageable sections blank for the student to complete. For more intensive scaffolding, provide the student with a bank of phrases and words for them to select from. Provide the student with a writing frame that has sentence starters included. Make sure I monitor regularly so I can give prompts and feedback to keep the writing flowing. Use interactive writing as an opportunity to practise applying letter-sound knowledge (and getting immediate feedback). <p>Some of these ideas could be mini lessons with other students, for example, rehearsing stories with a partner, language experience, interactive writing.</p>

Writing in the second year of school

In the second year of school, students' writing gets longer and more complex and students become able to elaborate on their ideas. They may choose to use graphic organisers as part of their planning. Students are increasingly aware of the audience for their writing. They choose more precise vocabulary – for example, they use adjectives and a wider variety of verbs to provide extra detail and make their writing clearer and more interesting for the reader.

They are writing increasingly for curriculum purposes. Follow-up activities after guided reading will often involve writing. They have a large bank of known words that they can write quickly and easily and a wide repertoire of strategies for generating words (for example, by applying their knowledge of spelling rules and word structures, such as changing the form of a verb or adding prefixes and suffixes). They take more responsibility for checking and revising and can give and respond to feedback.

Strategic instruction to support writing

Continue to model and explicitly teach the skills and strategies that your students need – in particular, those that build their awareness of how to revise and improve their work through use of strategies such as “guided revision” in a helping circle and working with a buddy to check their spelling.

Find out more

- For information about self-assessment and peer assessment, see *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*, pages 62–63.
- For an example of using peer conferencing with year 2 students, go to: <http://education.waikato.ac.nz/research/files/etpc/files/2011v10n4art3.pdf>

Strategic instruction to support writing

What to teach	How to teach it
Support students to elaborate on their ideas and add detail.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind your students of the purpose and audience for their writing. <i>We are writing to explain to other classes how and why we made a worm farm.</i> • Model the use of questions to generate ideas. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Have I told the reader what a worm farm is? – Have I written about all the materials we used? – Have I explained what we did before we put the worms in? – Have I told how the worm farm works now that the worms are living there? • Have the students practise asking questions of each other. • Use shared and guided reading texts as models.
Support students to use appropriate and precise language.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw attention to examples of precise, descriptive language in texts, for example, in the Turquoise-level Ready to Read texts <i>Pencils and Pens</i> or <i>At the End of the Day</i> or the shared text, <i>Bikes</i>. • Raise your students' awareness of the need for precise language by having them play barrier games. (In barrier games, pairs of students work together with a barrier, such as an upright book, between them. One student gives instructions to the other for a task, such as drawing a picture or making a simple construction using blocks. The task encourages precision with language because there are no visual clues to rely on.) • Model the use of precise, descriptive language during shared writing and plan follow-up tasks, for example, to describe a family member. • Give feedback that tells the students why their writing is effective. <i>You have given us a good description of your grandad. It has made a difference using these words that tell us more about the "where", like "at the back of his garden". You remembered what we talked about yesterday.</i>
Support students to use a variety of sentence structures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage your students to discover interesting sentence structures in literary texts and create a reference chart of examples. • Encourage flexibility with sentence structures (and extend vocabulary) by having the students innovate on sentence models. For example, "She raced into her room with Mya close behind her" (<i>Mya's Finger</i>, page 3) could transform into "The rabbit jumped into his hole with the hawk just behind him." • If they are creating overlong sentences with ideas joined by "and" or "and then", set a limit on the number of ideas per sentence. Model ways of combining clauses within sentences during shared writing and draw attention to examples in shared or guided reading texts. • Build metacognition. <i>Show me one of your sentences that you think is particularly effective and tell me why you think it is.</i>
Support students to monitor their work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prompt your students to use their visual memory and visual aids to check the spelling of some known words. <i>Use a coloured pen to underline three of your scientific words, like liquid, solid, particles, heat, or stir. Now work with a buddy to check the spelling of at least three of those words.</i> • Direct them to read their work quietly to themselves and to check for meaning. • Support them to build metacognition. <i>What did you do to check if there were errors in your writing? What did you do to fix them?</i>

Spelling and word activities

The following activities give students opportunities to increase their spelling accuracy and to learn more about how words are constructed.

- Matching topic words with their meanings (that you have previously written out on cards)
- Locating words with specific features in newspapers and magazines
- Playing spelling and word games, including computer games
- Arranging word cards in alphabetical order (as a step towards being able to locate fiction by the author's name in the school library or being able to use a dictionary or index)
- Adding to class collections of word types, for example, words ending in “ful” or particularly interesting adjectives or verbs.

Year 2 – increase the pace

Example

The teacher, Sue, noticed that many of her year 2 students were attempting to write several sentences in their stories but were struggling to add interesting detail. She wanted to support them to add more information to their stories. Sue identified that one way to help them was to encourage them to build more detail in their planning “sketches”. First, she planned to model how to use sketches to quickly plan writing and then to show her students how to go back to their sketches for their sentences.

Before Sue began, two things were uppermost in her mind. First, she wanted to differentiate planning from illustrating, so she decided to talk about “sketches” rather than “pictures”. Secondly, she decided to model planning by thinking out loud about how she used extra detail in her sketches as a way of helping her add more information to her writing.

Sue: I notice that some of you are writing two sentences, but you don't give the reader enough information. I want to show you how I use sketches to help me plan for my writing. Watch me as I plan what information I need and add details to my sketch to help me remember them when I am writing. As I show you, we will see the important things we need to think about and the things we need to do. I want you to do the same thing with your planning.

Sue: I am going to tell you about my cat, Treasure. This is my sketch of her. I want to show in my sketch that she is a hissing, spitting, and scratching cat. There she is.

Student: She looks angry.

Sue: Why do you think she looks angry?

Student: 'Cause she has angry eyes.

Sue: You are right. I wanted to show that she is angry, so I drew her with squinty eyes pointing down. I need to add this information to my sketch so I remember to use it in my writing.

The story I want to tell about Treasure happened last night. Last night it rained. Treasure hates the rain and always hides behind the curtains when we tell her to go outside, so I'm drawing her hiding behind the curtains. I will add this detail to my sketch. It will help me because as I write my story, I will be checking my sketch to remind me of what I want to write about. (Sue begins writing, referring continually to the sketch plan.) The first thing I need to do is to introduce my cat. "My cat's name is Treasure." What do I need to say now? (She uses her finger to show what part of the sketch she is thinking of writing about next.) She adds: "She hates the rain." Can I say more about this? (She goes back to the sketch and chooses the section that shows Treasure hiding.) "She hides behind the curtains when we tell her to go outside."

Sue stopped her modelling at this point. The students talked about their own sketches with a partner and then added any new ideas to their sketches before continuing their stories.

Teacher monitoring and reflection

Problem identified through ongoing monitoring	Questions	Possible responses
The student uses a limited range of vocabulary and writes only the initial letter for words they are not sure of.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this a lack of confidence, or does the student need work on their letter–sound relationships? • Does the student have a hearing problem? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retest with Hearing and Recording Sounds in words and Writing Vocabulary – look for any trends and patterns. Refer for hearing check if indicated. Talk with parents and possibly provide home practice tasks. • If it's a confidence problem, clarify expectations that they need to try to record more sounds but there are lots of ways to help, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Focus intensively on word-generating strategies. Practise during interactive writing so there is immediate feedback. – Plan for specific links between reading and writing, including targeted independent literacy tasks. See <i>Sound Sense</i>. – Set clear goals for writing, monitor regularly, and provide feedback.

Writing in the third year of school

In a year 3 class, there will be emphasis on building fluency and flexibility. Students will be creating texts for a variety of purposes, including to support their thinking. Their written texts will become longer and more complex, and they will show greater independence in planning. Increasingly, students will write non-fiction texts to support learning in a range of curriculum areas. For example, a study of changes in transport over time could include the following purposes for writing:

- description – observing and describing an older form of transport (penny farthings, old cars viewed at a car museum, or a waka)
- explanation – explaining what is needed to catch a train or how to use a walking bus
- interview – with older people, perhaps grandparents, about what transport was like when they were little
- report – comparing and contrasting what grandparents or great-grandparents remember about earlier transport with what they notice about transport today
- argument – supporting an opinion about road safety for students walking to school
- personal recount – recalling personal experiences of journeys.

Students will often transform one form of information into another. For example, they may contribute to a group chart to record the steps involved in “A New Home for Mokokoko” (in *Junior Journal* 43) and then use the information to construct a flow chart of the process. Continue to encourage students to focus on:

- choosing relevant content
- building vocabulary
- ways of organising ideas for writing
- revising and editing their text for clarity and impact
- giving their peers feedback on their writing
- metacognition – developing awareness about the writing processes and purposes
- spelling, punctuation, and grammar (and proofreading to check these aspects).

Strategic instruction to support writing

What to teach	How to teach it
Support thoughtful vocabulary use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage your students to incorporate new words from their oral vocabulary and/or reading and make deliberate choices in the words they want to use, and to be precise and descriptive. Extend vocabulary by discussing effective writing. For example, discuss the use of precise vocabulary in a procedural text. Provide feedback to affirm their successful attempts. For example: Student writing: <i>Drip a tablespoon of water over the compost to dampen it.</i> Teacher feedback: <i>This instruction is really clear. You have used descriptive verbs and precise nouns.</i> Make links between reading and writing. <i>Let's see what the writer did to describe this character so effectively. Then we'll have a go in our own writing.</i>
Support students to give and receive feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set clear goals about what to look for and comment on when your students are giving peer feedback. <i>Listen to the first part of your buddy's description. Check to see if the words they have chosen give you a picture of the person.</i>
Support self-monitoring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct your students to reread what they have written to check that their writing makes sense and they have met their writing purpose. Prompt them to use their visual memory to check the spelling of high-frequency words, and to use dictionaries to check unknown words – after their own attempt. Set clear expectations. <i>You will have identified some words you need to check. I'll give you a few minutes to check three words. We'll discuss these words to see which ones have been a problem today.</i> Prompt them to recall their learning goal as they monitor their writing, for example: <i>We have been learning about time sequence words that show the order of something happening. We were focusing on "first", "then", "next", "finally". Check through your piece again. Put a little dot in the margin where you have used one of those words.</i>

Teacher monitoring and reflection

Problem identified through ongoing monitoring	Questions	Possible responses
Texts are poorly structured – ideas or events are jumbled, main points and supporting detail are not linked. Feedback hasn't improved the writing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the student understand the purpose for their writing? What is the link between the student's planning and their writing? Which one is the problem? Both? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make a copy of the student's work and support them to identify and highlight the main ideas. (Using colour will show how jumbled it is.) Discuss the problem with the student and set a very clear overall goal: "My writing will fit the writing purpose." Set up ways for the student to monitor this (for example, write the purpose for each piece of writing on their plan and in their draft book). Have a set of prompt questions to consider and discuss every day. Provide support with organising ideas. Focus on planning. Limit to three main ideas and use writing frames to help organise supporting detail. Use the computer for a few weeks so changes to drafts can be easily cut and pasted. Keep writing tasks similar for a few weeks so the student can become familiar with planning and writing particular types of texts. Then start to introduce variety. Monitor closely and provide feedback.

Accelerate progress

Intensify instruction to accelerate progress

Regularly monitor your students and gather assessment information to identify those who are making slower progress than expected. Probe further to pinpoint the problem using appropriate assessment procedures, for example, monitoring and analysing their writing, using the Writing Vocabulary, Letter Identification, and/or Hearing and Recording Sounds in words tasks in the Observation Survey. (See “Other assessment tools” on page 5 for further information about assessment.) Discuss your concerns and assessment data with colleagues to confirm your students’ most pressing needs and appropriate ways of scaffolding their learning.

When working with students who have greater needs, draw on the same instructional strategies and approaches to writing that are described in *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4* but intensify the focus. The table below shows how you can intensify your instruction to provide extra scaffolding for high-needs students. Note that the intention of intensifying instruction and providing extra (temporary) scaffolding is for students to learn ways of overcoming a current challenge and to move forward in their learning.

Find out more

See Picking up the Pace: <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/ece/4971>

Intensify instruction to support students with higher needs

Supporting strategies	Intensifying instruction
Share learning goals with students and discuss the goals regularly with parents or caregivers.	Plan and share learning goals with your students that are specifically designed to meet their learning needs. Check that they understand their goals – that they are sure about what they are learning to do and why. Monitor them as they write, using think-alouds, prompts, questions, and feedback to maintain their focus on the learning goal (and their progress towards it).
Use prompts to support students to achieve a specific goal.	Shift the level of scaffolding in your prompts if your students are not clear about what is needed. Instead of a reminder prompt that you may have used (for example, <i>Remember to think about the sounds you know when you are writing a new word</i>), try a scaffolded prompt (for example, <i>Say the sounds you can hear in “fishing”. What is the first sound you can hear? What is the last sound you can hear? Right. The tricky sound in the middle is “sh”</i>) or try an example prompt (for example, <i>What are the letters that are in the middle of “fishing”? Are they “sh” or “ch”?</i>).
Help students to build metacognitive awareness – to reflect on and regulate their learning.	As you monitor and discuss your students’ writing, remind them of their learning goal and encourage them to talk about what they did to meet the goal – or about anything they found difficult and what they did to try to overcome the difficulty. Provide feedback to help them notice what they are doing well and to guide them towards the most efficient strategies – for example, draw on what they know about letters and sounds, rather than search through a picture dictionary or a wall chart every time they want to write a word they don’t know. Encourage them to discuss what they have done, what they have learnt, and how they have learnt it.
Model and demonstrate to the whole class or to groups of students.	Model and demonstrate to a small group of students with similar needs. Provide many opportunities for guided practice – for example, repeating the same writing task with minor variations, such as innovating on a familiar sentence structure.

Supporting strategies	Intensifying instruction
Plan activities with appropriate levels of challenge.	Have your students move on to small-group interactive writing to practise what you have modelled during shared writing. Over several sessions, as they gain control over the task, reduce the level of scaffolding by asking them to apply their new learning during guided writing and then independent writing.
Look for opportunities to help students to transfer knowledge (make connections between what they know and what they are learning).	<p>Plan tasks that will help your students transfer their learning – for example, plan a language experience activity to build vocabulary and knowledge of a topic and follow this up with shared and interactive and guided writing sessions in which you can prompt them to use this knowledge as they talk and write.</p> <p>Choose a text for shared or guided reading that has some of the features you plan to focus on in class writing – for example, specific word features, vocabulary or sentence structures, a similar topic or theme, or the overall text structure.</p> <p>Model to your students how they can transfer their knowledge and prompt them to do so – for example, <i>Remember how Greedy Cat went to the school “Day after day”? You could start your sentence the same way.</i></p>

Provide for the needs of gifted and talented students

In addition to highlighting students who have higher needs, your assessment procedures may help you to identify students who are gifted and talented. For detailed information about supporting these students in your school, see *Gifted and Talented Students: Meeting Their Needs in New Zealand Schools* at <http://gifted.tki.org.nz>

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